

March 91 1974

Dear Harold,

I am glad you addressed me by my first name. Correspondents who address each other by their given names, more often than not, are friends. People who type as badly as we do should be friends. I take it you want to be friendly. You disavow any purpose to insult or hurt me. And you spare neither energy nor language in endeavoring to persuade me I am incompetent to investigate areas of the Kennedy assassination you have already worked over, and can only do harm if I persist.

I, for my part, am concerned about you, too. At first I thought you got up in the dark to wrestle with your typewriter in Sisyphean effort to organize the data you had unearthed into significant truth. My offer of editorial help was intended to ease your task. From your last letter, however, I see you rise before dawn also to dig for water. In that, alas, I cannot help you. I am too far away and have not the strength.

Can not your student proteges or protegees help out? The hunger of youth for truth and its capacity for idealism and self sacrifice enrich the annals of history. At the moment I am thinking of the youthful Diggers who, with their elders, occupied wasteland in the Parish of Walton-on-Thames in Surrey in 1649, during the English Civil War, planted vegetables, and invited the people of the district to join them and share equally in their communal venture. The Diggers, who were Christian pacifists, were driven out by local people who valued property above humanity. Some think the Diggers were the true forerunners of the Quakers. And, we know, other socialist utopians, in later years, in various countries, including the United States, also aspired in word and deed to found cooperative societies. It is possible some residue or token of this inextinguishable social instinct survives among the students whom you instruct and, if awakened, would reduce your hours with spade or shovel.

It would be a boon to me, too. For I think your physical toil roils the tenor of our correspondence. I am at a loss otherwise to understand how you who are so carefully accurate in your examination of evidence could attribute to me the view Jacqueline Kennedy was a party to the plot to murder her husband. As you say, you wrote to me hours after reading my letter. Between reading and writing you must have been digging. I hope you struck water.

You may be pleased to know, under the whiplash of your scorn and inspired by your example I have done some digging of my own. I had to slake my thirst for information which you hold as a cactus holds water and give up in miniscule droplets amid piercing spines. I discovered that rear-admiral, presidential physician G.G. Burkley is, apparently like you, an early riser, but at a later hour. On the morning of November 22, 1963 he awoke in Fort Worth, Texas, if he can be believed, at 6:30 a.m. I found no evidence to support that time but, on the other hand, I see no reason to impugn the doctor's accuracy or veracity. Agreed?

The rest of Burkley's day was busy. He watched and heard the president make a pre-breakfast address to an enthusiastic crowd in the open air, and another at breakfast which was televised. Then Burkley went in the motorcade to the airport and emplaned with the president's party for Dallas where he rode in the fatal motorcade with Kennedy's secretary, Mrs. Lincoln, too far in the rear of the presidential limousine to be "exactly aware what had happened." Burkley's car took him to the Trade Mart which he departed in a "commandeered" car, under police escort, to Parkland Hospital where he arrived "five minutes following the arrival of the president." In my previous letter I wrote, in error, Burkley accompanied the president to the hospital. Mercifully, you didn't jump on the error when you wrote to me. I guess you were tired from digging or typing.

At the hospital Burkley went straight to the emergency room and, standing at the head of the table on which Kennedy lay, saw death was imminent. Burkley corrected the hospital doctors who were supplying the wrong blood type to Kennedy but felt his "direct services" to his charge would interfere with the recusitative team's efforts to save the president and he attended Mrs. Kennedy who stood inside the door of the trauma room with Burkley's arms protecting her" and her head "momentarily" on his shoulder. I do not know what Burkley did while Mrs. Kennedy knelt in prayer but when Dr. Clark pronounced Kennedy dead, Burkley "verified" his colleague's judgment. He told Mrs. Kennedy.

When a priest arrived Burkley asked him to recite prayers for the dead and joined Mrs. Kennedy in the responses. Burkley accompanied Mrs. Kennedy outside the trauma room, heard her express a wish to remain with the president's body until it reached the White House, summoned the hospital superintendant and "ordered" him to procure a casket and a conveyance for it. Burkley asked Dr. Clark to make out the "necessary papers" to take to Washington. He explained the "necessity for quick action" to the Dallas medical examiner who said "the remains could not be moved...as this was a homicide case and they would have to go through procedure." After "some confusion" and "delay," when the casket arrived Burkley supervised the transfer of the president's body into it. After the trauma room was vacated Burkley inspected it and found Mrs. Kennedy's roses in the wastebasket and two on the floor which he put in his pocket and gave to her enroute from the hospital to the airfield.

During the flight to Washington Burkley spoke to Mrs. Kennedy, kneeling on the floor to be on the same level with her face and to avoid leaning over her. He expressed everyone's and especially his own desire to comply with her wishes. Burkley also explained to Mrs. Kennedy the necessity for taking the president's body to a hospital "prior to going to the White House." To Mrs. Kennedy's query, "Why?" Burkley responded, "it must be determined if possible, the type of bullet used and compare this with future material found." I disavow responsibility for the English. Burkley thought the hospital should be a military one "for security reasons." Burkley assured Mrs. Kennedy he would remain with the president's body until it reached the White House.

When they reached Washington Burkley was the last to descend and rode with Mrs. Kennedy and Robert Kennedy in the rear compartment of the ambulance to Bethesda Naval Hospital. He "met" the president's body in the "mortuary" and "observed its transfer to the table" where an "examination was performed by Commander Humes and members of his staff." Another who "remained in the vicinity of the president constantly" was General McHugh, presumably the man Colonel Finck couldn't remember when he testified in the trial of Clay Shaw. "Also present" in Bethesda were Admiral Kenny, Admiral Galloway, and Captain Canada." Burkley made frequent trips from the "mortuary" to the 17th floor of the hospital to give Mrs. Kennedy and "those in that area"... some idea of the contemplated departure time." During the "examination" of the president's body Burkley removed his wedding ring from the "appropriate position" on Kennedy's finger and "carried" it to Mrs. Kennedy. Burkley accompanied Kennedy's body to the White House.

All the words in quotation marks are Burkley's. The entire account, without interpolation and interpretation; titled "Report of my participation in the activities surrounding the assassination of PRESIDENT JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY," with capitalization in the original; signed "George G. Burkley, Physician to the President;" and dated "November 27, 1963" at "8:45 a.m.," constitutes Commission Exhibit No. 1126; and occupies one half of page 93 and pages 94 to 97 inclusive of Volume XXII of the Hearings of the Warren Commission. Presumably Burkley's report was addressed to the Warren Commission and like the statements of President Johnson and Mrs. Johnson was not sworn to.

It is quite a story which belies the popular cinema stereotype of the stern admiral, duty bound and devoted to the art of killing. I cannot imagine Burkley standing on the deck of the burning and sinking Bonhomme Richard and shouting to the British who request his surrender, "I have not yet begun to fight." By his own account he seems more like Sir Joseph Porter, First Lord of the Admiralty in Gilbert and Sullivan's HMS Pinafore. Burkley's love of flowers and his chivalric concern for sorrowing widows attest a sensibility too fine to permit the use of such uncouth terms as "autopsy" and "death certificate." He must be modest, too, for he made no mention in the script of his adventures in gallantry to his authorship of a second set of "necessary papers" on November 23, 1963 when, after rising early, he composed his report at 8:45 a.m.

But was our admiral-doctor, as he painted himself, only a latter-day knight errant and inconsequential busybody? Or, did his sentimental gallantry cloak more serious activity? Did Don Quixote's armor conceal the scheming heart of Iago? Burkley ~~he~~ avows he initiated the kidnapping of the president's body in Dallas. Why did he inspect the vacated trauma room? Was it to look for roses? Or, for bullets? Enroute to Washington Burkley learned the Dallas police held a leftist working class nobody for the murder of the president. In flight he explained to Mrs. Kennedy who was intent on conveying the president's body to the White House the prior need to make an "examination" of it in order to find ballistic evidence

to link with other evidence yet to be found.

This last - what does it signify? Stupid innocence? Or damning confession he linked the police frame up in Dallas with the butchered autopsy in Washington? And if the latter, was he not privy to the murder plot? Is this what Burkley's mawkish report conceals? Is this what you meant when you wrote in one letter Burkley did not "merely" sign a second death certificate, and in your last letter, there is no mystery surrounding Burkley? Or will you say my suspicions mark me paranoid? If you think so, prove it. If you have knowledge establishing Burkley's true role before, in, surrounding, and after the assassination it would be wrong to bury it. If it exculpates Burkley he's entitled to the exoneration. If, on the other hand, it indicts him as a greater or lesser conspirator, it opens a road to the military-industrial complex in whose ample womb the assassination was conceived. In that case you can do no less than Eisenhower. Incidentally, what do you tell your students about Burkley?

In detailing the hard luck you had with indexes you mentioned Frame Up which deals with the assassination of Martin Luther King and has an index. Frame Up was published by Outerbridge and Dienstfrey and was distributed by EP Dutton and Co. Why won't they publish your 600-page manuscript? Did you submit it to them? Did they say it was too long, needed editing? Suppose they were approached with the offer of an edited, professionally typed, and indexed manuscript? And if they said no there are others? What do you say? You don't want to sit on your book like a hen on an egg, waiting for the truth to hatch.

There's another matter of compelling interest. Have you read the news stories about the disclosures of past FBI surveillance of the Socialist Workers Party? You know, of course, Oswald applied to it for membership. Surely, there must be information in the documents made available very recently under the Freedom of Information Act about the FBI's watch on Oswald. Is this perhaps one of the unexplored areas you are pounding me to explore? Will you give me leads? What is the procedure for gaining access to the FBI files? How do I avoid duplicating what you have already done in this area? As a true friend I will be grateful for any help you can give me.

As for the transcript of Colonel's Finck testimony - could one or more of your student proteges Xerox your copy and send it to me? It can't cost much; if you let me know what's involved I'll send the money for copying and postage, and labor, too, if necessary, immediately.

I leave for another letter your remarkable statement you have no argument with my political concepts. I think that's the most important thing you've said to me. But it leaves me puzzled. If we are in agreement politically what's all the fuss and feathers about?

On page two of your last letter, in describing my "persistence," you used the pronoun "her." Aren't you a little confused? My name is - - - - -

Thomas